

Learning Motivational Interviewing: A Counselor's Journey



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Clients need to Discover their Own Reasons for Recovery and Find Motivation From Within

The first semester of my internship was spent learning to conduct evaluations and establishing continuity and positive interactions with clients. During my second semester, I will be expanding my abilities to assist clients through the use of Motivational Interviewing (MI). During the NIDA clinical trials research the use of MI was associated with clients coming to and staying in counseling. MI utilizes a nonjudgmental approach which in my experience with clients has been an effective way to help them work through their issues and reach their goals. I will be monitoring my use of these skills over several sessions with one client through a rating scale where I rate and record my own counseling skills on a tracking sheet.

The rating scale is a product of the NIDA-SAMHSA Blending Initiative¹. It was developed because during the NIDA clinical trials researchers discovered that the development and maintenance of MI skills was a challenge for counselors. This self-evaluation will help me improve my skills and monitor my developing collaborative approach to therapy. The use of this rating scale and tracking sheet should be done in a honest manner with an explanation as to how the skills are applied. I need to assess when the skill is being used or when the opposite of the skills are being used (i.e. judgmental, closed ended questions, advice giving). At the end of this internship, I should have the ability to be proficient in Motivational Interviewing as an evidence based therapeutic intervention which promotes the goal of client change.

Assessment of Counseling Skills

The tracking sheet includes ten skill sets that are consistent with the Motivational Interviewing approach. The skill sets are:

1. Motivational interviewing style or spirit
2. Open-ended questions
3. Affirmation of strengths and change efforts
4. Reflective statements
5. Fostering a collaborative atmosphere
6. Motivation to change
7. Developing Discrepancies
8. Pros, cons, and ambivalence
9. Change planning discussion
10. Client-centered problem discussion and feedback.



Progress and Outcomes

I was able to use the tracking sheet over a six session to rate my use of the ten skill sets from:

1. Not at all
2. A little
3. Infrequently
4. Somewhat
5. Quiet a bit
6. Considerably
7. Extensively.

This scale was self rated. In the early sessions the self rating showed a range of 4-5. This range improved with the latter session tracking to 5-6. During this process my use of MI inconsistent items decreased.

The Drawbacks and Gains

The use of a rating scale can be effective in viewing increases or decrease in abilities and skills, there is however a draw back to the use of a scale. It is subjective to the individual who is using it. I will be taping sessions and rating my skills with my supervisor as well. Overall the use of this scale did aid in focusing on the use of Motivational interviewing skills and to be aware when the opposite was occurring, especially falling into the advice giving position, which is tempting. One of the remarkable discoveries was the fact the client I counseled was able to talk the most, and provide their own insight. This is in essence is what Motivational Interviewing strives to accomplish.

1. MIA:STEP Blending Product - NIDA/SAMHSA Blending Initiative - ATTC Network.
<http://www.attcnetwork.org/explore/priorityareas/science/blendinginitiative/miastep/>